



REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, MOBILE  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
P.O. BOX 2288  
MOBILE, ALABAMA 36628-0001**

**31 May 2007**

**CESAM-PD-EI  
PUBLIC NOTICE NO. FP07-AC01-16**

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
ALABAMA POWER COMPANY REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO REDUCE  
MINIMUM FLOW ON ALABAMA RIVER**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Mobile District, has received a request by the Alabama Power Company (APC) for a temporary modification of the minimum flow agreement between APC and the Corps for operation of their power project impoundments on the Tallapoosa and Coosa Rivers in conjunction with the Corps operations of the Federal projects in the Alabama and Coosa River Basins. The minimum flow agreement is required by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licenses for the APC impoundments and also incorporated into the water control plans/manuals for the Corps projects. The APC request is in response to extreme low inflows and extended drought conditions experienced this year. This notice is requesting comments from Federal, State and local agencies, municipalities, affected industries, organizations and the public regarding potential affects of the proposed reduction in flows. Information provided in response to this notice will be considered by the Mobile District in determining whether or not to implement drought contingency operations under the Corps' current water control plans as requested by APC. Please communicate this information to interested parties.

**WATERWAY:** APC-owned lakes on tributaries to the Alabama River include Lakes Harris, Martin, Yates and Thurlow on the Tallapoosa River. On the Coosa River they include Lakes Weiss, H. Neely Henry, Logan Martin, Lay, Mitchell, Jordan/Bouldin. The Federal project reservoirs include Allatoona Dam and Lake on the Etowah River and Carters Dam and Lake on the Coosawattee (Coosa River basin) and Robert F. Henry Dam/R.E. "Bob" Woodruff Lake, Miller's Ferry Dam/William "Bill" Dannelly Lake, and Claiborne Dam and Lake on the Alabama River.

**DROUGHT CONDITIONS:** Monitoring of drought conditions this year has confirmed that Calendar Year 2007 is the driest year-to-date through May recorded in contemporary Alabama climate records. Some areas in the northern portions of the States of Alabama and Georgia have received no rainfall in the month of May. Severe to Extraordinary Drought conditions have

developed across these areas. The January to May time period for 2007 is the driest in over 100 years for Alabama, Georgia, north Florida and portions of the Carolinas. Long-range computer models indicate no significant rainfall across the central Gulf States through early June.

**APC PROPOSAL:** Attached is a letter from the APC dated 15 May 2007 regarding a drought contingency proposal requesting approval by the Corps to reduce the overall total average release of water from APC reservoirs. This request would require a temporary modification to the minimum flow agreement between APC and the Corps. Under terms of the current minimum flow agreement, APC projects will provide sufficient releases from their Coosa and Tallapoosa River projects to meet a continuous minimum 7-day average flow of 4,640 cubic feet per second (cfs) (32,480 day second feet (dsf)). Additional intervening flow or releases from the Federal projects would provide usable depths for navigation or meet the 7Q10 flow of 6,600 cfs at Claiborne Dam downstream. APC is currently making the minimum releases from their projects to meet the 4,640 cfs requirement, but has expressed concern that the continued minimum release, if drought conditions and the extremely low inflows into the basin continue, could result in continued drawdown of their reservoirs to levels at or below their drought contingency curves. APC therefore requests consideration of proposal to reduce releases from their projects by phased increments as shown in their attached letter. The proposed reductions would be accomplished in four steps, reducing the flow by approximately 10% per week (or other appropriate time period), until the proposed minimum is achieved. The proposed minimum of 19,488 dsf would constitute a total 40% reduction in minimum flows previously agreed to by APC in the current minimum flow agreement.

The Alabama Office of Water Resources has requested information on how the Corps intends to operate Allatoona Lake and Carters Lake to help mitigate the current drought conditions. APC has also requested that the Corps provide additional releases from storage from the Allatoona and Carters projects to supplement the record low flows downstream of those projects. The specified minimum release for both Allatoona and Carters projects is 240 cfs; currently we are releasing up to 600 cfs from Allatoona and approximately 400 cfs from Carters.

**EVALUATION OF REQUEST:** The Corps is given discretion to manage its reservoirs by the Flood Control Act of 1944. The procedures for water management actions at Corps projects are set out in Engineer Regulation 1110-2-240 (33 C.F.R. Part 222.5), which states as follows in regard to droughts:

"Continuous examination should be made of regulations schedules, possible need for storage reallocation (within existing authority and constraints) and to identify needed changes in normal regulation. Emphasis should be placed on evaluating conditions that could require deviation from normal release schedules as part of drought contingency plans (ER 1110-2-1941)."

Engineering Regulation 1110-2-1941 requires water managers to reexamine procedures and reservoirs to determine whether improvement can be made during low water periods within current authorities. Under this regulation, the Mobile District developed a drought contingency

plan for the Robert F. Henry project located on the Alabama River first in line below the APC projects on the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers. This drought contingency plan for the Robert F. Henry project is found at Paragraph 7-10 of the Water Control Manual for the project. It states that the project is dependent on releases from the upstream APC projects to meet the authorized project purposes, which must be provided pursuant to their FERC licenses. Accordingly, the Mobile District and APC instituted a minimum flow agreement to provide for environmental protection and navigation flows on the lower river. The drought contingency plan allows a lesser amount to be released from the Federal projects as local flows diminish and storage is exhausted. However, the plan requires the users of the system, private industries, state agencies and federal agencies with interests in the system to be notified in advance of any reduction and given the opportunity to comment. The Mobile District can allow for reductions of the minimum flow agreement if such a change would aid in the total operation of the river system and provide the maximum benefits from any available water. As drought conditions develop, the Corps will provide routine press releases to the general public advising on operational and climatological conditions throughout the river basin. Also, public meetings may be conducted throughout the basin as necessary to keep agencies, major industries and the general public informed on impending conditions and to solicit comments regarding potential changes in project conditions.

**POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED ACTION:** When drought conditions determine that a change in the operating guidelines is necessary, various users of the system will be notified so that environmental or operational preparations can be completed prior to any impending reductions. The Corps will also consider the impacts on the users of the system and consider environmental and operational concerns in reaching a determination on appropriate changes in operations. The proposed reductions in water releases from APC lakes as described above could include but not be limited to various impacts on the human and natural environment. The reduced flow from the Tallapoosa and Coosa Rivers would result in reduced flow on the lower Alabama and Mobile Rivers and lower lake levels in the downstream Federal reservoirs unless augmented by increased releases from the upstream Corps reservoirs within the river basin. Such reductions could have downstream impacts to users of the waterway, while increased releases from Corps lakes higher in the basin could have impacts to those users. In addition, reduced flows on the Alabama River system are only partially mitigated by flows from the Tombigbee system since approximately two-third of the flow into the Mobile River comes from the Alabama River system during low flow conditions compared to approximately one-third from the Tombigbee River system.

APC indicates that their storage projects on the Coosa and Tallapoosa are all below their drought contingency curve peak elevations. With inflows at record lows on the Coosa and Tallapoosa, the impact of maintaining a release of 4,640 cfs to the Alabama River has fallen completely on the remaining storage at Lake Martin. If the proposed reductions are not implemented, APC has indicated that the Coosa River projects would be drawn down to their winter levels and Lake Martin is projected to be 14 feet below the rule curve by early August. This drawdown at Lake Martin would have adverse impacts on the water intakes on the lake. APC's analysis indicates that if this drought continues unabated they are in danger of losing all generating capability at Weiss, Neely Henry and Logan Martin Dams as water levels become too low to operate the turbines. APC is concerned that without sufficient releases from the upstream

Corps storage projects they could see these levels before the end of the summer. APC states that the loss of this generation would severely impact the reliability of the electric system.

If APC's proposal is fully implemented, river levels could fall below elevation 4 feet on the Claiborne Dam tailwater. This represents a reduction of the 4,640 cfs flow to 2,784 cfs flow. The reduction in flow could represent less hours of generation from R.F. Henry and Millers Ferry projects, reduce navigation channel depths on the Alabama River, adversely impact waterborne recreation, and may affect the assimilative capacity for industrial and municipal users. The flow reduction could also potentially affect flows, water quality, salt water intrusion, and environmental resources in the Mobile Delta and Bay area.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** This public notice is being distributed to all known interested persons in order to assist in developing facts on which a decision by the Corps can be based. The decision on the appropriate drought contingency operations will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact, including cumulative impacts, of the proposed activity on the public interest. Comments are requested on specific impacts to other users and operations that occur within the basin. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, cultural values, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food production, and in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, State, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; industries; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity.

Correspondence concerning the proposed reduction in flows as proposed by APC and should be directed to the District Engineer, U.S. Army Engineer District, Mobile, Post Office Box 2288, Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001, Attention: Planning and Environmental Division, in time to be received not later than **10 calendar days after the date of this notice**. Comments may also be emailed or faxed to Mr. Chuck Sumner, Inland Environment Team, FAX: (251) 694-3815, Email: [lewis.c.sumner@sam.usace.army.mil](mailto:lewis.c.sumner@sam.usace.army.mil). Questions concerning this public notice may be directed to Mr. Sumner at (251) 694-3857.

MOBILE DISTRICT  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

**Willard L. Bowers**  
Vice President  
Environmental Affairs

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May 15, 2007

Colonel Peter F. Taylor, Jr.  
Commander, Mobile District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Attention: CESAM-DE  
P. O. Box 2288  
Mobile, Alabama 36628-0001

Dear Colonel Taylor:

Since I wrote you on April 26, drought conditions have continued to get worse and the conditions of our reservoirs have deteriorated. If we continue to meet the navigation flow for the Alabama River, by July 4 we expect all reservoirs to be near their drought contingency curve.

Since any reduction of this flow would impact water users, I have requested time to make a short presentation to the Alabama Drought Planning (ADAPT) meeting on May 24, 2007. I will present a proposal to implement a reduction in the navigation flow of approximately 10% a week according to the following schedule:

Current	32,480 cfs-days
Stage 1	May 28 – 29,232 cfs-days
Stage 2	June 4 - 25,984 cfs-days
Stage 3	June 11 - 22,736 cfs-days
Stage 4	June 18 – 19,488 cfs-days

These reductions would be adjusted depending on flow conditions that might develop. This current schedule is based on our projection of operations, including the north Georgia projects. I wanted to make sure you had an opportunity to provide any thoughts on this since it will ultimately be the Corps who would approve such a change.

I would also like to point out that last month, after observing inconsistencies in gauged flows, we became suspicious that the Mayo's Bar gage was over reporting flow. On Friday May 4 we undertook our own flow measurement using an Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler and measured 1,414 cfs at a time the gage was reading 1990 cfs. On May 7<sup>th</sup> the USGS adjusted the rating for this site and the reported value is now in line with other gauging.

Thank you for your attention to this matter as we continue to work cooperatively in managing the water resource projects of the Alabama-Coosa-Tallapoosa Basin through these unprecedented conditions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Willard L. Bowers".

Colonel Pete Taylor  
May 15, 2007  
Page Two

cc: Trey Glenn – ADEM  
Jerry Sailors – CARIA  
Brian Atkins – OWR  
Jeff Powell – USFWS  
Stan Cook – ADCNR  
Doug Otto – Corps  
Memphis Vaughn – Corps  
Robert Allen – COE  
Sheldon Morgan – Warrior-Tombigbee Association